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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Summary

In the present report, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) describes activities in some of the fields considered in the recommendations identified by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at its fifth session. The report also discusses some of the activities that FAO is currently undertaking in relation to the special theme of the sixth session of the Forum, namely, Territories, lands and natural resources.

Section I of the report mentions a number of meetings relevant to indigenous peoples that were organized or supported by FAO and provides information on cultural indicators of indigenous peoples' food and agro-ecological systems. FAO activities on the rights-based approach as it relates to indigenous peoples have included the establishment of a special Right to Food Unit to follow up on the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (Rome, 2005), and to work on legal and technical studies, advocacy and education material for the promotion and implementation of the Guidelines. In the area of gender, indigenous peoples and biodiversity, FAO has produced studies documenting the Maasai traditional management of livestock, and their breeding and selection of animals in the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as a study on Maasai indigenous knowledge of range management and forage plants. The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems project initiated in 2002 is currently being carried out in seven countries including several indigenous communities.

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Section II considers the activities that FAO is undertaking related to land and territories, including an examination of its work concerning the recognition of traditional land rights within policies and legal frameworks, participatory delimitation of lands and territories, alternative conflict management regarding land tenure, and participatory and negotiated territorial development. Also discussed are the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (Porto Alegre, Brazil, 7-10 March 2006), where a special thematic session was organized on "Indigenous peoples and their right to land, territories and resources: synergies and tensions with agrarian reform and rural development", and the FAO biennial publication *Land Reform, Land Settlement and Cooperatives*, which was considered topics related to the special theme of the Forum's sixth session.

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I. Activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) related to the recommendations identified by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at its fifth session

Indigenous peoples and communication for development

1. It has been noted that indigenous peoples often have limited access to the communication and information services needed to support their own development goals. It is therefore crucial that they implement ad hoc communication-for-development policies so that they can participate more fully and effectively in development.

2. During the first World Congress on Communication for Development held in Rome from 25 to 27 October 2006, a special session on indigenous peoples' communication for development was organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The session focused on the role of communication in combating the marginalization and isolation of indigenous peoples and on its potential to foster their self-determination and development. The session was chaired by Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Representatives of indigenous peoples worldwide shared their relevant experiences, and participated in an interactive discussion with the audience. The session was based on the results of previous activities organized by FAO in Bolivia in September 2006 in collaboration with other indigenous peoples' organizations: the regional workshop on indigenous peoples' communication for development in Latin America, and the subsequent International Meeting on Indigenous Peoples' Communication for Development.

3. The special session of the World Congress recommended guaranteeing the right of indigenous peoples to communication for self-determined development. The participants agreed that it was essential to promote policies, mechanisms and initiatives that guaranteed and enhanced the realization of the right to communication of indigenous peoples. In line with the purposes of the special session, FAO produced two video programmes on indigenous peoples' experiences in respect of communication and sustainable livelihood.

4. An important outcome of the meetings in Bolivia was the establishment of a Latin America regional communication platform on indigenous peoples' communication and sustainable livelihood supported by the secretariat of the Permanent Forum, FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). This platform will be an important vehicle for dialogue and collaboration between United Nations organizations and indigenous peoples in the region.

Cultural indicators of indigenous peoples' food and agro-ecological systems

5. Indigenous peoples worldwide are urgently calling for recognition of the fundamental and vital importance of culture for the viability of their traditional food and agro-ecological systems, as well as for sustainable development. Culture encompasses the shared beliefs, values, traditions, customs, knowledge and

ceremonies that people transmit across generations and use to define and sustain their collective identities and the relationship of indigenous peoples with each other and the world. Traditional cultural practices and food systems are positively related and mutually supportive and both are fundamental for food security and well-being. However, development interventions, as well as global trends of expansion of industrialized agriculture, monocultures, and the market economy, can have negative and, in some cases, devastating impacts on the traditional food systems, subsistence-based economies and agro-ecological systems upon which indigenous peoples depend for survival.

6. During the regional consultation for the follow-up to the World Food Summit and the World Food Summit: five years later, held in Guatemala from 23 to 25 April 2004, indigenous peoples emphasized the importance of indigenous culture for sustainable agriculture and food systems, as expressed in the Declaration of Atitlán. Since then, FAO has been working with indigenous peoples' organizations to identify cultural indicators for sustainable agriculture and rural development. In 2004, FAO supported indigenous peoples in the elaboration of a "Survey on Cultural Indicators of Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Indigenous People's Traditional Foods and Cultures". In 2006, a technical paper entitled "Cultural indicators of indigenous peoples' food and agro-ecological systems" was prepared by FAO with the support of the Government of Norway.

7. The technical paper provides a literature review that elaborates and validates indigenous peoples' views about some of the most important cultural indicators of food security, food sovereignty, agro-ecological systems and sustainable development. It also reviews indicators currently in use or recently identified by other organizations to monitor these interactions, and proposes areas for which new indicators may be needed. The document offers evidence of the relationship between indigenous culture and food and agro-ecological systems. A review of the research and scientific basis for the factors, interactions and trends recognized by indigenous peoples was undertaken in order to support the capacity of indigenous peoples themselves to convince others of the legitimacy of their views.

Second Global Consultation on the Right to Food, Food Security and Food Sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples

8. The FAO perspective on the right to food, food security and food sovereignty for indigenous peoples was presented at the second Global Consultation thereon, held in Bilwi, Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, from 7 to 9 September 2006. The meeting was organized by the International Indian Treaty Council and the major group focal point for indigenous peoples, with FAO technical support and financial contributions from the Government of Norway and the Christensen Fund. The aforementioned FAO-produced technical paper "Cultural indicators of indigenous peoples' food and agro-ecological systems" was discussed during the meeting. This meeting was held immediately after the Permanent Forum's Latin American Regional Consultation on Indicators of Well-Being, which was also held in Bilwi. The outputs of the Consultation were highly relevant to, and thus fed into, the discussions of the Global Consultation.

9. The meeting brought together 30 representatives of indigenous peoples from Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, Northern America and Europe, as well

as representatives of local government (Nicaragua), and of a number of United Nations organizations. The participants at the Global Consultation identified a set of 11 main indicators of well-being, which they agreed to organize within the following five clusters:

(a) Access to lands, territories, natural resources, sacred sites and ceremonial areas;

(b) Abundance and scarcity of, and/or threats to, traditional seeds, plant foods and medicines, and food animals, and their associated production practices;

(c) Use and transmission of knowledge, methods, language, ceremonies, dances, prayers, and oral histories, related to traditional foods and agro-food systems, and the continued use of traditional foods in daily diet;

(d) Capacity for adaptability, resilience and/or restoration of traditional food use and production;

(e) Ability of indigenous peoples to exercise their rights of self-determination and free prior informed consent, and to defend their food sovereignty and their own development.

FAO and the rights approach in relation to indigenous peoples

10. In November 2004, the FAO Council unanimously adopted the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security.[1] The adoption of the Guidelines reflected the movement of FAO away from the debate over the normative content of the right to food towards a more practical approach entailing implementation. Operational in nature, the Guidelines are both a practical tool designed to orient States' policies and measures and an advocacy tool for use by all stakeholders in implementing the right to food at the national level. The Guidelines cover a wide range of actions to be considered by Governments aiming both to create and secure an enabling environment for all where people can feed themselves in dignity and to establish safety nets for those who are unable to do so for reasons beyond their control.

11. Crucial in this regard is the problem of securing access to productive resources for all individuals and groups. Fighting hunger and malnutrition requires tackling the problems of discrimination that characterize the situation of many groups that are politically or geographically marginalized or live in relatively remote areas. In this regard, guideline 8.1 states, inter alia, that "(S)tates should respect and protect the rights of individuals with respect to resources such as land, water, forests, fisheries, and livestock without any discrimination" and that "special attention may be given to groups such as pastoralists and indigenous people and their relation to natural resources". Empowerment and participation are stressed in the Guidelines as key elements of a rights-based approach, and people's capacity-building is indicated as one way to enhance them. In the case of indigenous peoples, the hunger problem (already a critical issue per se) overlaps with that of discrimination. Recent developments in the areas of both indigenous issues and the right to food suggest a joint approach to the two areas, and renewed attention to themes that are becoming dominant in the human rights agenda.

12. In 2006, FAO established a special Right to Food Unit to follow up on the Voluntary Guidelines. During its first year, the Unit has produced legal and technical studies, advocacy and education material for the promotion and implementation of the Guidelines, and human rights-based approaches to food security. In 2007, the Unit plans to issue a technical paper on the right to food and indigenous issues and an analytical study on human rights, the right to food and access to natural resources. The fact that the theme of the 2007 World Food Day (16 October) is "The right to food" will provide an opportunity to promote that concept in every country that celebrates the Day.

Gender, indigenous peoples and biodiversity

13. Gender is a core FAO programme that cuts across all of the activities of the Organization. Some of the activities related to indigenous peoples and gender involve issues relating to biodiversity. Together with the Government of the Netherlands, FAO is working on a project on gender, biodiversity and local knowledge systems devised to strengthen agriculture and rural development in Southern Africa. The project, entitled "Gender, biodiversity and local knowledge systems for food security (LinKS)", focuses on local and indigenous knowledge systems and their important role for sustainable agro-biodiversity management and food security. It is aimed at raising awareness about how rural men and women use and manage biodiversity and at promoting the importance of local knowledge at local, institutional and policy levels. Training and capacity-building, support to research activities, communication and advocacy to enhance sharing, and exchange of information on the value of local and indigenous knowledge are key activity areas of the project. The project has carried out case studies that document specific constraints and opportunities for men and women farmers in local seed management, selection and breeding of animals, managing tree crops, etc. The studies reveal the difficulties women face in having limited access to natural resources. They also reveal the critical linkages between rural, informal management systems of natural resources and national policies. The gender dimensions of the biodiversity and knowledge systems of the Maasai groups have been documented in studies on:

- Preferences and criteria employed in selection and breeding of livestock by the Maasai in the United Republic of Tanzania
- Change of local knowledge systems related to breeding and selection of animals of the Maasai in the United Republic of Tanzania
- Utilization of indigenous knowledge of range management and forage plants for improving livestock productivity and food security in the Maasai and Barbaig communities

Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)

14. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002), FAO presented a partnership initiative on conservation and adaptive management of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) with the support of the Global Environment Facility and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations University (UNU), IFAD, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), BioDiversity International and country partners. The initiative aims to achieve the recognition, conservation and sustainable management of such agricultural systems and their associated landscapes, biodiversity, knowledge systems and cultures. The initiative's major target beneficiaries are small-scale, traditional family farmers, resource-poor local communities and indigenous peoples. The initiative will provide an opportunity for the international community to recognize and support the contribution of indigenous peoples to conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture, cultural diversity, and food security through their own unique agricultural practices and management systems.

15. In order to provide systematic support for the conservation and adaptive management of GIAHS, the programme strategy involves interventions at three levels. At the global level, the programme will facilitate international recognition of the concept of GIAHS and will consolidate and disseminate lessons learned and best practices derived from programme activities at the pilot-country level. At the national level in pilot countries, the programme will ensure mainstreaming of the GIAHS concept in national sectoral and intersectoral plans and policies. At the site level in pilot countries, the programme will address dynamic conservation and adaptive management in communities. It is expected that the programme will also contribute to key global sustainable development agendas through (a) enhancing the benefits derived by local populations and indigenous peoples from the management, conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity and natural resources; (b) adding economic value and sharing derived benefits from these systems; and (c) enhancing food security and alleviating poverty in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals, the World Food Summit Plan of Action[2] and national poverty reduction strategies. During the programme development phases for 2002-2006, five GIAHS were established in seven countries encompassing: Chiloe agriculture in Chile; rice-fish agriculture in China; Andean agriculture in Peru; Ifugao rice terraces in the Philippines; and oases of the Maghreb in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. In 2007, the full-scale GIAHS programme will be implemented in the pilot systems and activities will be carried out with Huilliche and Mestizo communities in Chiloe island, with Aymara and Quechua communities in the Peruvian Andes, with the various ethnic groups of Ifugaos in the Philippines, with Berbers in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, and with the traditional Han community in China.

II. Contribution of FAO with respect to the special theme of the sixth session of the Forum: Territories, lands and natural resources

FAO land tenure work on indigenous peoples issues: recognition of traditional land rights within policies and legal frameworks

16. The integration and recognition of customary land rights within land tenure legal frameworks and policies have constituted one feature of FAO work, especially in Africa. An important experience was provided by Mozambique, where FAO provided technical support to the participatory formulation process of the Land Law

and Land Policy, recognizing communities' customary rights to access and management of the land. Land Law 19/97 of Mozambique embraces a rights-based approach as regards recognition of both the communities' customary land rights and those of people who have been occupying and using the land in good faith for more than 10 years. While the State maintains its role as the owner of all of the territory of Mozambique, both types of land users are recognized in their right to occupy and use the land through the *direito de uso e aproveitamento da terra* (DUAT). All forms of tenure grant the holder exclusive rights over the land, and rights holders have full legal status. Existing customary and good-faith settlers have permanent rights, whereas newly acquired rights are granted for a maximum period of 50 years, renewable for another 50 years.

Participatory land delimitation

17. FAO has formulated an approach to facilitating the delimitation of land in a participatory and negotiated manner on the basis of the experience in Mozambique. The requirement of issuing land rights certificates in a territory where community and other land parcel boundaries have not been surveyed or delimited physically presents challenges for the reconciliation of conflicting land claims — when, for example, claims of land settlers and communities overlap either wholly or partially. The approach follows normal participatory adjudication procedures, including appropriate negotiation, mapping and agreement of boundaries and natural resources ownership of indigenous peoples among all parties, so as to enable the data to be recorded in the national cadastre/registration system.

Land tenure alternative conflicts management

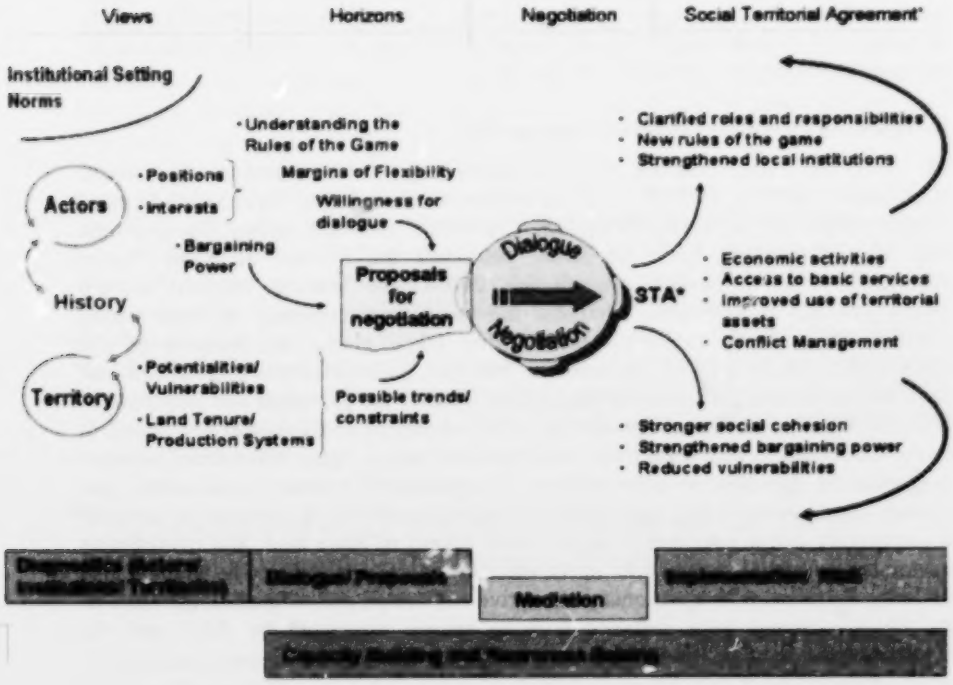
18. FAO has a long-standing interest in addressing the causes and management of land tenure conflicts. In 2006, FAO, in collaboration with the Livelihoods Support Project funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development and the International Land Coalition, published the Manual on Land Tenure Alternative Conflict Management (Rome, 2006). The Manual, targeted at land tenure conflict practitioners, analyses the main characteristics of land tenure conflict, the context in which the conflict takes place, the features of the stakeholders taking part in the conflict, and their balance-of-power relations and provides users with the resources required to identify the processes and evolution of a conflict and the different options for its management and eventual resolution. It deals with conflicts that arise over: inherited land tenure rights; boundaries between neighbouring families or communities; disagreements between pastoralists and farmers over access to land and water in a specific territory; disagreements between a community and a government agency over access to State land; and overlapping customary and legal frameworks in the recognition of land rights. The Manual also includes exercises with a regional perspective elaborated and refined on the basis of an FAO-facilitated pilot distance training course organized by FAO and the International Land Coalition in 2005.

Participatory and negotiated territorial development

19. The participatory experiences in both land delimitation and conflict management have led to the development within FAO of an open and participatory development planning methodology as the basis for defining community-based territorial plans. This provides an approach to prevention and management of

problems arising from local competition, including competition over land and natural resources. The methodology allows for a negotiated aggregation of local demands and provides inputs for an adaptation/redefinition of national and local plans to meet such demands. The main purpose of the process is to strengthen the dialogue and mutual trust among the various actors and between the actors and the institutions. Decentralized institutions (whether local or municipal) represent the main entry point in a collaborative attempt to influence social, cultural and political change and to improve the design of, and coordination between, interventions at the different decision levels (from civil society and organizations related to the State and its decentralized bodies). Each case should be analysed from the points of view of the actors regarding current issues and problematic trends, causes of tensions or conflicts, and local opportunities and potentials that need to be developed (human, social, environmental, productive, etc.). The general approach to territorial planning adopted with this methodology — which embraces the complexity and totality of the territory — cannot overlook the need for these concepts to be oriented towards offering practical solutions for sustainable rural development to FAO member countries.

20. The following figure gives an idea of the process and the products:



Indigenous peoples and the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

21. The FAO Strategic Framework defines a strategy that accords high priority to providing more equitable access to land and other natural resources. FAO is convinced of the importance of the commitment towards agrarian reform and rural development in the development agenda. Progress in these areas is fundamental if the goal is to be achieved of reducing by half the number of poor and hungry people by 2015, as set out in the Millennium Development Goals.

22. FAO and the Government of Brazil organized the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, from 7 to 10 March 2006. The meeting provided an important opportunity for the participants — Governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and United Nations and intergovernmental development organizations, to renew the commitment to, and review different experiences of, agrarian reform and rural development around the world by analyzing impacts, processes, mechanisms and the nature of the actors involved, in order to develop proposals for future action. Five themes were discussed during the meeting:

(a) Policies and practices for securing and improving access to land and promoting agrarian reform;

(b) Building local capacities to improve access to land, water, agricultural inputs and agrarian services so as to promote rural development and a sustainable management of natural resources;

(c) New opportunities to strengthen rural producers and communities;

(d) Agrarian reform, social justice and sustainable development;

(e) Food sovereignty and access to resources.

23. Several indigenous peoples groups joined the conference. Together with six other constituencies of civil society, indigenous peoples were represented in a panel session on agrarian reform and food sovereignty "on equal footing" with government representatives. An indigenous person was selected by the parallel civil society forum on "Land, territory and dignity" to present in the plenary the Forum's results and declaration. The secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues organized a special thematic session during the Conference on "Indigenous peoples and their right to land, territories and resources: synergies and tensions with agrarian reform and rural development". The session discussions, which focused on the challenges to promoting and reaching the Millennium Development Goals through agrarian reform and rural development within the indigenous peoples' perspective, provided important inputs for the final Declaration of the Conference.[3]

24. As indicated in the Conference declaration, indigenous peoples' organizations, as well as other civil society organizations and United Nations organizations dealing with food sovereignty, food security, agrarian reform and rural development, will continue to participate in the process of implementation of the principles (see paras. 29-30 of the Declaration).

Land Reform, Land Settlement and Cooperatives

25. The FAO Land Tenure and Management Unit (formerly the Land Tenure Service) publishes the biennial journal *Land Reform, Land Settlement and Cooperatives*. The 2004/1 issue of the journal focused on indigenous peoples and land rights. The publication provided an overview of indigenous peoples and their land rights, analysed by geographical region, together with examples of how indigenous land rights are dealt with in specific countries, including Ecuador and Peru in Latin America, Zimbabwe in Africa, New Zealand in the Pacific and the Lao People's Democratic Republic in Asia.

Notes

[1] Rome, FAO, 2005; see also E/CN.4/2005/131, annex.

[2] See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Report of the World Food Summit, 13-17 November 1996* (WFS 96/REP), part one, appendix.

[3] Available from www.icarrd.org/.